

VZCZCXRO3003
OO RUEHDA
DE RUEHAK #0624/01 1200912
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 300912Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9536
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC//PA
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 9639
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 5684
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 3802
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 7270
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 7148
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3726
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
RHMFISS/USDOCO 6ATAF IZMIR TU
RHMFIUU/39OS INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFIUU/AFOSI DET 523 IZMIR TU
RHMFIUU/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFIUU/AFOSI DET 522 INCIRLIK AB TU
RUEUITH/AFLO ANKARA TU

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000624

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#)
SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2009

President Gul and FM Babacan Speak Regarding
Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan
Mainstream Sabah reports President Gul spoke to reporters on his way
to Prague and said "The normalization process between Turkey and
Armenia is very important" and he has "high hopes that the problems
between the two countries will be resolved during 2009." In a
related story, Foreign Minister Babacan responded to a question
regarding the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict from CHP Deputy Sukru
Elekdag by saying, "The Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict is being watched
by six countries. We will be initiating comprehensive consultations
within the next few weeks. Our goal is not only the normalization
of Turkey-Armenia ties but the full normalization in
Armenia-Azerbaijan ties as well."

Meanwhile, according to ANKA news agency, Azerbaijani President
Ilham Aliyev said "Opening the border with Armenia is Turkey's
internal issue and we don't interfere with any country's internal
affairs and its bilateral relations."

Sabah newspaper also reports that Secretary Clinton and Armenian FM
Nalbandian had a telephone conversation regarding Turkey-Armenia
ties. Armenian Mediamax News Agency reported that Secretary Clinton
described the normalization process between Armenia and Turkey as
"an historic step" and expressed her expectation for a step forward
regarding the Karabakh issue.

Turkey Mourns The Deaths of 10 Soldiers
All papers: Nine soldiers were killed when their armored vehicle
was hit by remote-controlled mine in Lice town of Diyarbakir.
Reports indicated the PKK detonated 100 kilograms of explosives that
were planted on the side of the road. Another soldier was killed in
Semdinli town of Hakkari when the PKK opened fire on a military unit
while they were returning to their headquarters from an operation.
Mainstream Sabah reports that the military wing of the PKK Terrorist
Organization, HPG (People's Defense Forces) claimed responsibility
for the attack in Lice.

Turkish General Staff Denies any Links to Excavated Weapons
All papers: Chief of General Staff General Ilker Basbug held a

press briefing at General Staff Headquarters yesterday. General Basbug said "none of the weapons and ammunition found in excavations within the scope of Ergenekon probe belong to the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK)." Basbug expressed the military's commitment to democracy and the regime and said "Among the fundamental values of democracy are the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law.

Everyone should refrain from any act that may damage our judicial system. There is no individual within the TSK who may be engaged in any act against the democratic regime in our country." When asked to expand on his April 14 statement regarding the repentance measures of PKK members not involved in crimes, General Basbug said the existing penal code articles are sufficient for repentance but they need to be clarified and applied more effectively. On foreign policy issues, Basbug said "The TSK supports EU membership and in return expects the EU not to put forward demands to weaken the Turkish nation state." Commenting on his recent meetings with American counterparts, Basbug said "American officials visit Turkey not to demand something but to exchange views on various developments."

Editorial Commentary on General Basbug's Meeting with Press

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Given the content and the issues discussed at the TGS press event, we can conclude that military-civilian relations are undergoing a restructuring."

Yavuz Donat wrote in mainstream Sabah: "General Basbug gave good messages and presented these messages in a transparent manner. The tone of his press event favored democracy and indicated a military

ANKARA 00000624 002 OF 003

coup is out of the question."

Mehmet Yilmaz wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "The general's messages were all positive, but this is not the point. In normal democracies, military chiefs are not supposed to comment on political issues."

Hasan Cemal wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "It was not proper for the Chief of General Staff to comment on matters that should be addressed by the Prime Minister and other related ministries."

Ali Sirmen wrote in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "The military has clearly and unarguably made its commitment to democracy and the rule of law. Unfortunately today in this country civilians do not pass all requirements of a democracy. A country's future is at stake when civilians fail to upgrade the country's democratic standards."

Ahmet Altan wrote in leftist Taraf: "It will serve to everybody's good if and when the army focuses only on military matters instead of politics and legal issues. It will be good for democracy."

Fehmi Kuru wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "General Basbug gave long explanations to almost every issue but did not touch on the fact that he was exceeding the limits of military areas."

Fikret Bila wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "General Basbug made it clear that army is committed to democracy and stands against coups but remains distant and even skeptical on certain points of the ongoing Ergenekon investigation."

Former Justice Minister Escapes Suicide Bomb Attack Unhurt
Media outlets report former Turkish justice minister Hikmet Sami Turk escaped a suicide bomb attack unharmed when his bodyguards thwarted a female attacker at Ankara's Bilkent University Wednesday.

Didem Akman, a 25 year old DHKP-C (Dev-Sol) militant, approached Turk while he was on his way to his class at the university's law faculty. Bodyguards of Turk stopped Akman while she was trying to detonate the bombs wrapped on her body in front of the class door where Turk was about to lecture. Turk and the students in the class escaped the attack unhurt. Akman was rushed to hospital and her accomplice, Serkan Onur Yilmaz, was captured by the police while trying to leave Ankara at a bus station.

Turk, 74, served as justice minister from 1999-2002 in the government of late prime minister Bulent Ecevit. In 2000, Turk had ordered security operations -- dubbed 'Return to life' -- to quell prison riots in which 34 inmates were killed by security forces. Papers say the attack on Turk came one day after a lawsuit filed against the operation, was rejected under a statute of limitations.

Incirlik Airbase Photos Found in Al-Qaeda Suspect's House
Islamist-oriented Zaman reports Hikmet A, suspected to be a senior al-Qaeda operative detained in the April 21 crackdown on the organization in five provinces, had in his possession some aerial photographs and sketches of the Incirlik Airbase. The air control center and some security buildings were marked in the photographs. Zaman claims Hikmet A had received training in the al-Qaeda's camps in Afghanistan.

Countries Take Varying Degrees of Measures to Address Swine Flu
Media outlets report that, while the WHO has raised the threat level from swine flu, countries are taking various measures in efforts to control the spread of the virus. Conservative nationalist Bugun asks "Who and what can fight this flu?" Mainstream Vatan reports "Obama has asked for \$1.5 billion to counter this flu," and "Mexico is planning to cancel flights" as "the virus continues to spread." Mainstream Sabah reports "The disease has spread to 21 countries and still there is no cure." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports "Egypt has given the order to destroy all pigs as a measure against the virus,"

ANKARA 00000624 003 OF 003

and "Kyrgyzstan has banned meat imports from the U.S. and Mexico," while "Turkey's Health Ministry has warned all of its citizens that anyone who develops flu-like symptoms and has returned to Turkey from Mexico since April 12th should seek immediate medical attention." CNN Turk reports "Life Will Stop" in Mexico City as the city "will shut down public areas from May 1-5."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Health Ministry Deputy Undersecretary Turan Buzgan says the swine flu risk in Turkey was as high as in other countries.

- 34 media institutions are fined by the radio and television watchdog RTUK for making "live broadcasts" during Monday's shootout between the police and a terrorist in Istanbul.

- Turkey's Central Bank urges the government to carry out EU harmonization reforms and pass regulations listed in the pre-accession economic program.

- A ruling of the European Court of Justice in favor of the Greek Cypriots to reclaim their properties in the Turkish part of Cyprus might force Turkey to pay compensations totaling USD 40 billion.

World

- EU Foreign relations commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner says the bloc was considering halting all travel to Mexico and disinfecting all airports due to the global flu outbreak.

- President Obama says al-Qaeda and the Taleban are the "single most direct threat" to US national security.

- A missile strike by a suspected US drone kills at least six militants in northwest Pakistan's tribal area bordering Afghanistan.

- Libya's top oil official says his country is keen to invest in oil-and-gas exploration off Cyprus' southern coast.

JEFFREY